Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 28, 2019

Director Henry P. Ciolino, Ph.D.
Office of Cancer Centers
National Cancer Institute (NCI)
9609 Medical Center Dr.
Rockville, MD 20850

Director Ciolino,

The undersigned members of the Illinois Congressional Delegation write to express our support for the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's (Urbana) Cancer Center Support Grant application for a Basic Laboratory designation. The University's Cancer Center at Illinois (CCIL) brings together campus strengths in engineering and the life sciences to advance technological innovation in cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and survivorship. We are confident this modern approach will revolutionize how we fight cancer, for the good of Illinois as well as the nation and world.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in our state as well as our nation, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics. Since the War on Cancer began in 1971, the number of individuals who die annually from it has tripled and while progress has been made, the nation has struggled to see the kind of breakthroughs hoped for nearly 50 years ago.

As home to one of the best engineering programs in the world, Urbana has a long and storied history of technological breakthroughs. The CCIL harnesses that spirit of innovation to tackle tough questions around understanding cancer biology and developing therapeutics and cures. More than 400 faculty and researchers in training across 19 departments are working to leverage emerging technologies, like imaging, precision medicine, computation and modeling, nanofabrication, and drug discovery to bridge the engineering-biology continuum, with the single goal of improving and enhancing the lives of people battling cancer and their families.

The CCIL elevates cancer to a new level of public awareness in the state and priority within the University. With CCIL's focus on technology, educational training programs in the surrounding communities start at the high school level, while on campus undergraduates, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows are engaged and mentored to create a highly skilled workforce of engineer-scientists ready to tackle complex cancer problems. The University has many other assets that help complement the unique nature of this enterprise, including the world's first, recently opened engineering-focused college of medicine. This is just one part of the plan to cultivate and support the workforce of the future. Urbana has a long history of cultivating successful entrepreneurs, spin-offs, and startups; developing new technologies that can be taken to market is a key objective of the CCIL.

In this era of expanding costs and the need for higher quality cancer care in our nation, the CCIL's engineering and technological innovations will lead to a higher quality of care at lower cost for a greater number of citizens. At a time when there are growing concerns about how America will continue to retain its preeminence in global research and development, the CCIL will provide leadership through the use of technology to transform how we understand and fight cancer. We hope NCI will extend its support to this exciting and ambitious enterprise.

Sincerely,

Rodney Davis
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress

John Shimkus
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress